

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
February 23, 2005 @ 4:30 p.m. Council Chambers**

PRESENT

Gil Palmer
Cindy Felsten
Jay Myers
Chrystal Pushor
Wes Roy
Barbara Stevens
Madhu Vedak

ABSENT

Jason Staley
Marie Schroeder
Dick Underdahl-Peirce
Ian Kohen

Chairperson Palmer called the meeting to order.

STAFF PRESENT:

Director Arlette Tinsley, Deputy Director Lorraine Smith, Secretary Lula Young

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Commissioner Roy moved to accept the minutes of the regular full commission meeting of January 26, 2005. Commissioner Felsten seconded. Motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Commissioner Felsten advised that as of January due to an accounting software upgrade by the Clerk-Treasurer's Office, the Donations Account now reflects a current balance of \$5,967.61, which includes a deposit of \$20.00 for the sale of an oral history video. Director Tinsley reported that the Clerk Treasurer's balance of \$5,967.61 also includes a corrected 2005 appropriation to the account to reflect the accuracy of the account.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:

Chairperson Palmer shared with the Commission that the Columbus Police Department is now down to one minority officer. Officer Jang Lee recently left the department to pursue an opportunity in the Washington D. C. area.

Lt. Rudy Olivo, cultural liaison officer, requested suggestions on recruiting venues which would enable the police department to re-establish contacts for minority recruitment. Chairperson Palmer stated that any thoughts or ideas from the commissioners will be welcome.

Chairperson Palmer informed the Commission about the controversy involved in the attempts of a local citizen to establish a group home, Bethesda House, a transitional

home for recovering substance abusers. The citizen requested a variance to locate the home in the area of 4th Street and Lafayette Avenue. The variance requested was turned down by a vote of 3 – 2 by the Board of Planning and Zoning although planning department staff recommended approval of the variance and the facility met the requirements for the zoning variance and had some neighbor support. Director Tinsley requested that Chairperson Palmer direct to the CHRC staff any persons who have questions that might concern human rights on this issue.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Tinsley reported that current liaison Martha Myers informed her that Craig Hawes will return to the community early March 2005. She stated that he is excited about his return and may be re-appointed as the City Council's liaison to the Commission.

Jesse Brand, our new city council member, attended Deputy Director Smith's speech at Ivy Tech. Council member Brand shared with Deputy Director Smith that he worked on human rights issues while serving in the military.

Director Tinsley reported that the Hate Crimes/Sexual Orientation training for the Columbus Police Department was completed February 17, 2005. The officers completed a survey to evaluate the training. The first three weeks overall ratings were calculated and an overall rating for training content was 87.4%. Overall trainer rating was 90.1%. Under the 'comments' section of the survey, multiple officers stated the sexual orientation law overview was very helpful. Only one officer felt it was the least helpful. Both the Chief and training officer were positive. The lowest rating received was 78.8% for ability to hold interest.

Director Tinsley shared information on additional training resources on sexual orientation and religious minorities specifically geared for police officers.

Director Tinsley provided a case update, advising that one new race in employment case has been filed and a national origin in public accommodation case was successfully mediated.

The Terre Haute Human Rights Commission is benchmarking how communities are responding to the growing Latino population. Their intern will be meeting with staff on March 7th and will go throughout the community visiting agencies like SuCasa.

Director Tinsley informed commissioners that staff was advised that the Fair Housing banners displayed annually in the month of April, no longer meet quality standards for display. Judy Johns-Jackson has utilized Streetscape funds to pay for ten (10) new banners on behalf of the Human Rights Commission. A request to extend the display until May 6th will be submitted to the banner committee.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE/SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2005-06:

Director Tinsley announced the slate of officers for 2005-06 as: **Chairperson** – Chairperson Palmer; **Vice Chairperson** – Commissioner Myers; **Secretary** – Commissioner Schroeder; **Treasurer** – Commissioner Felsten. No additional nominations were submitted from the floor. Ballots were distributed to all commissioners. Per the votes of the written ballots the slate was accepted unanimously.

OPEN DISCUSSION FORUM:

Chairperson Palmer encouraged commissioner and staff attendance at the upcoming Vision 20/20 downtown community meetings. These meetings present an opportunity for the community to voice comments to be heard on what they need to bring them downtown. Vision 20/20 is committed to effecting change to revitalize downtown.

Commissioner Felsten advised that I.U.P.U.C is exploring the potential of bringing classes downtown.

LIAISON UPDATES – CULTURAL AWARENESS COMMITTEE:

Commissioner Roy reported that approximately 80 people attended the Neighbors Talking session. Attendees believed overall that there is a chance for redevelopment.

Commissioner Roy shared some of the observations by attendees, which ranged from the need for more repaired sidewalks to having more community conversations in the library with coffee and espresso available. Others commented on the tension and racial behavior, the “To Kill a Mockingbird” conversation and the incident at Calvary Community Church.

Another Neighbors Talking will be held during Juneteenth at Second Baptist Church.

Commissioner Roy also reported that the Cultural Awareness Committee has begun reviewing their mission statement and creating goals and objectives that are in alignment with the mission statement.

2004-05 ESSAY CONTEST:

All packets were hand-delivered by staff to the schools. Contest packets were also sent by e-mail. A special e-mail was sent to George Van Horn and several pupil services representatives highlighting the fact that this contest was more inclusive.

Over thirty people have volunteered to judge the essays and artwork.

Director Tinsley asked for commissioner volunteers to pick up essay packets from St. Bartholomew, Northside and Parkside schools. Commissioners Roy and Myers volunteered.

ANNUAL DINNER:

The annual dinner will be held at The Commons. Because the location will be more labor-intensive, there will be an increased need for commissioners to aid staff in successfully hosting the dinner. The caterer is still to be decided upon.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH PRESENTATION:

Deputy Director Smith provided the Commissioners with an overview of her Black History Month presentation to Ivy Tech students, faculty and the general public. Deputy Director Smith stated that she tried to provide a message which showed the range of voices within African American history and that in every sphere of American History and life, African Americans have contributed. She stated that many don't realize that when Carter G. Woodson created Black History month, the intent was to remind us all of the need to fill in the missing history pages of the African Americans and that Black History Month was intended to continue the curriculum from September throughout the year. She cited examples of African American history such as Crispus Attucks, an African American who was one of the first Americans to die fighting during the Revolutionary War; African American architects, scientists and poets from the Harlem Renaissance, or the complexity of the civil rights movement implemented through the tactical leadership of A. Phillip Randolph, a black union organizer. She stated that she tried to provide a layered presented background on Black History Month as many of the students didn't have any idea about its origins, yet there were some who had some idea. She also stated that her message attempted to show a connection between history and today. Deputy Director Smith stated that each of us can broaden our path to inclusion by making changes at three important levels: (1) through the legal landscape (2) at an institutional level and (3) on an individual level.

She described concrete examples for the audience to utilize in order to embark on a path to inclusion, such as finding out about the local human rights commission, challenging whether many voices are heard in the institutions where they worked or went to school; learning about the local history regarding civil rights, etc. She stated that she used this opportunity to give a history lesson regarding the depth and breadth of African-American history in this country and locally and to provide some real world steps that the audience could take toward a path of inclusion.

ADJOURN:

It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** to adjourn the meeting, which was supported in a unanimous vote. Meeting adjourned.

[Approved with amendment 3/30/2005, Commissioner Kohen's name added to attendance]